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Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
30 Providence Road
Grafton, MA 01519

**Meeting Minutes
Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
March 18, 2021**

A meeting of the Grafton Affordable Housing Trust was held at 7:00 PM on March 18, 2021, via Zoom. In attendance were: Chair Bruce Spinney, Vice Chair and Treasurer Elisabeth Haynes, Clerk Dan Cusher, Dan Crossin, Ed Prisby, Eric Swenson. Absent were: Curt Williams. Guests in attendance were: Jenn Goldson (JM Goldson, LLC), Karl Moisan (165 Worcester Street), William Moisan (165 Worcester Street), Dean Harrison (165 Worcester Street). Staff in attendance were: Chris McGoldrick (Town Planner).

1. Project Updates

a. 25 Worcester Street - Preliminary concept plan and review

- Bruce gave some background information. At Town Meeting last fall, the Town gave this land to the Trust to use for affordable housing. The Trust hired an engineer to survey the property and provide some concepts, which were presented for this meeting. Bruce noted that they're a maximum density plan using apartment buildings, that it might not be what the Trust decides to go with but it's a starting point and there may be more concepts in the next few weeks.
- Bruce noted that for an apartment development, if 25% are affordable, all 100% count toward the subsidized housing inventory.
- Ed pointed out that there were 25 or so attendees at the meeting and that there hadn't been this many attendees at a Trust meeting in 10 years. Ed gave a brief history of 40B and affordable housing in Massachusetts, and said he wanted everyone to remember that Massachusetts is in a housing crisis, and that the proposal is a starting point. Ed said that he believes that providing housing is a moral question, and asked the attendees to try to keep an open mind and listen, and know that the Trust will be seeking their input through the process.
- Elisabeth asked Ed about single people who are younger than 55 who only have one income and would like to own a home. Ed said that when you add housing stock for people who are more over-housed like seniors are when they continue to live in their family homes after their children grow up and move out, it provides an opportunity for them to move out of that home and make those homes available to others. Ed agrees that apartments for single people should be our next project.
- Chris displayed the proposal and Bruce walked through it. It showed three three-storey buildings with 20 single-bedroom units, total 60 units.

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- Dan Cusher asked what about the proposal should be considered more or less concrete, in particular the number of units. Bruce said the 60 units should be considered a maximum, and that the Town has had other proposals on smaller land for similar density, though those are often reduced as they go through the process.
- Eric asked what the units would look like, if they would all be the same. Chris said that would come up much later in the review under the ZBA, and that the affordable units must be mixed throughout the different units in the development.
- Bruce noted that the Trust gets to dictate the percentage of affordable units, but that a 100% affordable development would be a much smaller scope project.
- Bruce reiterated that the Trust's role includes advocating for affordable housing in the community.
- Elisabeth mentioned doing for-sale townhomes. Bruce said that's another option we should consider for our next meeting.
- Ed noted that for-sale units are less beneficial for the SHI because only the affordable units count toward it. He also noted that lower density means helping few people, which is the whole point.

b. Rental Assistance

- Bruce said there are a lot of federal and state programs that are helping people, so there were fewer people left needing our help.
- Elisabeth asked how many people we helped. Chris said he would need to check again for the exact number but it's between 10 and 20.
- Bruce said mortgage assistance wasn't really feasible inside the framework the Trust used for the rental assistance. Bruce asked if the Trustees would be interested in extending the program again and suggested that the Trustees mull it over and consider it at a future meeting.

2. Consultant Services Introduction - Jenn Goldson

- a. Jenn introduced herself. She's a planning consultant who does a lot of work with affordable housing trusts, and is a former Town Planner. Jenn gave an overview of the services she offers and listed some that she thought would be most useful to the Trust: help implement Trust-initiated projects, assist and advise with funding requests, provide training for the Trust, GIS services, and updating the Affordable Housing Action Plan.
- b. Jen went over the process by which a town activates development on town-owned land.
- c. Ed asked what the common pitfalls are for Trusts doing their first project on town-owned land. Jenn said one is going too far with concept plans, because a developer might not know exactly what the Trust came up with, and if they're too prescriptive the Trust could run afoul of 30B - she even recommends coming up with alternatives. Jenn said a second is not getting enough community involvement from the start.

3. 165 Worcester Street, North Grafton; Project proposal - Dean Harrison

- a. Dean introduced himself, informing the Trust that he is an affordable housing consultant and has been in affordable housing for over 30 years in various roles, including some

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interacting with Grafton in the past. He's representing applicants for a 40B Local Initiative Program (LIP). The proposal is for four townhomes, all for-sale, one of which would be affordable. Since applying, the owners have thought about possibly adding more units and making another one affordable.

- b. Dan Cusher asked what the Trust's role is in the LIP process. Dean said there are a couple of options to get in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals with a 40B comprehensive permit. One of those options is the LIP, which is going with the local community to get the endorsement of the Select Board. Dean came to the Trust because having the endorsement of the Trust helps earn the endorsement of the Select Board.
- c. Elisabeth said she feels the project would be best with just four units and is concerned about fitting more cars on the property or traffic in the area.
- d. Bruce noted that the goal for a discussion like this is to find a balance between benefit to the subsidized housing inventory and marketability. After the Trust, the project will get vetted through the whole 40B process, including things like traffic. He said the Trust should see projects in all shapes and sizes and then let the apparatus of the town handle whether they can provide the variances to certain things. Bruce also said that the Trust should be advocates of these programs, so when they move forward to the ZBA, the Trust should be there to advocate for it.
- e. Dean reiterated that they'd like to continue the conversation around possibly doing an additional affordable unit and seeing what the Trust could do to help offset that, as the affordable units will be sold at a price below what it costs to build them.

4. Action Items

- a. WDA Design Group - Invoice for Services, 25 Worcester Street
 - **Dan Cusher moved that the Trust pay the invoice from WDA Design in the amount of \$5,982.48. Eric seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.**
- b. Meeting Minutes
 - **Dan Cusher moved to accept the minutes for the meetings on December 14, 2016, December 17, 2018, February 13, 2019, March 13, 2019, April 10, 2019, December 21, 2020 as presented. Eric seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.**

5. Discussion Items

- a. Hiring and Staff Services
 - Bruce noted that Jenn Goldson is one of the consultants we could work with for this, and that there aren't a lot of other consultants out there who do this work. He said a benefit to consultants is that you bring them in for a project and when that project is done, you stop paying them.
 - Bruce asked Chris for an update on the Planning Department's budget in terms of permanent staffing for the Trust. Chris said there's a part time position in the FY2022 budget to be funded in half by the Trust and half by the Planning Department.

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- Ed said he feels that the trust functioned at peak performance when Ann Morgan was working with the Trust through the Planning Department, allowing the chair to focus on the bigger picture.
 - Dan Cusher observed that it seems like the Trust has more work than the volunteer Trustees can cover, and that it requires a level of expertise that not all the Trustees have, and that having more help from staff would amplify what the Trustees can accomplish.
 - Bruce said if the Trust is paying for staff, the Trust will want to get that many hours of work done on the Trust's work. Bruce would also like the Trust to have a role in creating the job description and choosing the candidate pool.
- b. Hudson Avenue Property
- Bruce said this is a brilliant site for high density housing. The Cemetery Department has control of this land and Town Meeting would need to vote to give it to the Trust before a project there could move forward.
 - Elisabeth said she thinks it would be a perfect property to have townhomes.
 - Ed asked where this project left off last time the Trust looked into it. Bruce gave some history, noting that the Trust previously put some effort into getting information on the land and deciding if it would be a good site. Later in that process they found that there was a Town Meeting warrant article in the 1960s that gave the land to the Cemetery Department for cemetery expansion. The Select Board talked to the Cemetery Commissioners who said they will need the space some time in the next 25 to 35 years.
 - Bruce feels that there's an appetite from the town for another project like this, considering how easily Town Meeting gave 25 Worcester Street to the Trust.
- c. Online Presence and Coordination with William Blake
- Ed said William is our communications liaison who can put things on the Town website and social media for us.
 - Dan Cusher said that he met with William about possibly creating a Facebook page for the Trust. Dan said William told him that the Trust can manage their own Facebook page as long as they send a request to the Town Administrator detailing who the page is for, the goals or intent for the page, and a list of individuals who will have access to post as the page. The Town Administrator would then have to approve it.
6. **Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman 48 hours in Advance of Meeting**
- a. Chris informed the Trust that he spoke with Hank Rauch from the Worcester Habitat for Humanity, who expressed interest in working with the Trust on projects.
7. **Adjournment**
- a. **Dan Crossin moved to adjourn. Elisabeth seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.**

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Approved by the Affordable Housing Trust: April 15, 2021